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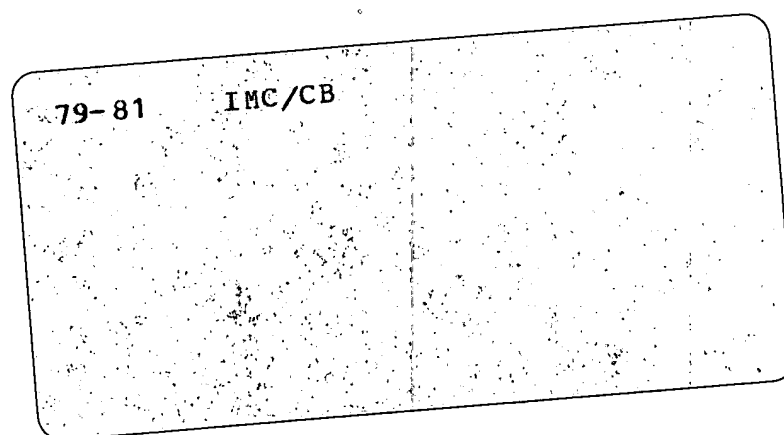
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Afghanistan Situation Report

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8 April 1986

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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CONTENTS**THE WAR HEATS UP**

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Fighting intensified this week in Paktia Province between regime forces and the Hizbi Islami (Khalis) insurgent group. Other clashes occurred southeast of Kabul, as well as in Qandahar and Nangarhar Provinces.

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BABRAK SPEECH URGES COMPROMISE

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Babrak Karmal's recent address to the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan--reaffirming the regime's commitment to broadening the social base of the revolution--was a veiled warning to those opposed to bringing non-PDPA members into the government.

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PRISONER EXCHANGE: A NEW PHENOMENON?

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During the past several weeks, several prisoner exchanges were negotiated between the insurgents and the Soviets and Afghan regime. The Soviets and Kabul regime see exchanges as a useful tool to broaden popular support.

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SOVIET SU-24 STRIKE AIRCRAFT DEPLOY TO TURKESTAN

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A squadron of Soviet SU-24 strike aircraft that has deployed to Turkestan could enhance Soviet capabilities for air operations in Afghanistan

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IN BRIEF

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PERSPECTIVE

THE WAR IN MARCH



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Afghan Army troops conducted more independent combat operations during March, while combined Soviet-Afghan forces continued efforts to block insurgent resupply and infiltration. Preparations are under way for the spring offensives.



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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the Office of Soviet Analysis.



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THE WAR HEATS UP



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Press reports indicate heavy fighting in Paktia Province on 6 and 7 April between regime forces and members of the Hizbi Islami (Khalis) insurgent group defending their base near Zhawar Kandao.

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the Soviets had established a command post at Gardeyz. This may be a prelude to another sweep toward Ali Kheyl which last conducted combat operations in early March.

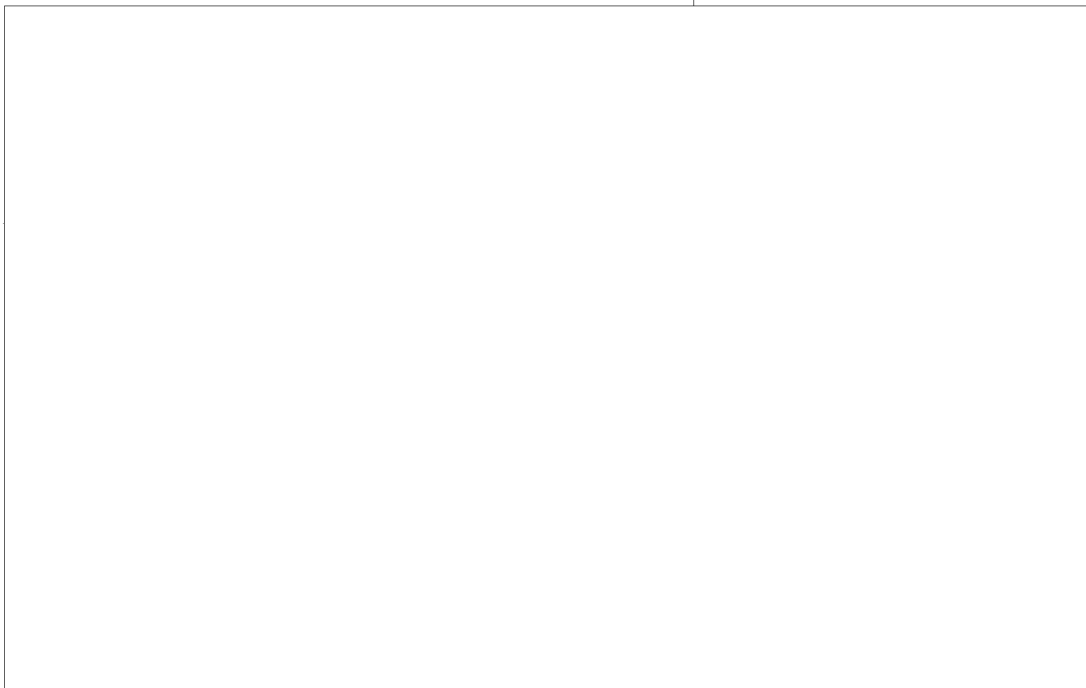
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BABRAK SPEECH URGES COMPROMISE



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Babrak Karmal's address to the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) Central Committee on 27 March reaffirmed his commitment to broadening the social base of the revolution. It reiterated themes of last fall--the regime's need to build its armed forces, win the loyalty of the border tribes, and open the government to non-party members and representatives of the various tribes, ethnic groups, and classes. At the same time, Babrak criticized corrupt and ineffective



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party officials and conceded that his government's aggressive campaign to enlarge the armed forces had been only "implemented partially" and "needs more work." He noted that the military commissioner of Qandahar had been removed for incompetence. Citing Lenin, Babrak added, "We do not have the right and must not reject compromise, provided it ends in the major aim, the establishment of nationwide peace and security." [REDACTED]

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Comment: The speech was a veiled warning to elements in the party who have been resisting the Soviet-instigated campaign to bring non-party members into the government. Rank-and-file PDPA members are almost certainly concerned that Moscow's efforts to improve the public image of the Babrak regime are preliminary to a negotiated settlement that would sacrifice the party's and their own personal interests. Babrak's admission that army recruitment drives are falling short of their goals underscores the nearly impossible task he faces in trying to expand the armed forces.

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PRISONER EXCHANGES: A NEW PHENOMENON? [REDACTED]

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During the past several weeks, several prisoner exchanges were being negotiated in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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Comment: The flurry of negotiations is unusual. From the Kabul regime's viewpoint, prisoner exchanges are intended primarily to further its objective of broadening popular support. The willingness of some insurgents to deal with regime officials probably is seen as an encouraging development by Kabul; most guerrillas previously would discuss prisoner exchanges only with the Soviets. The insurgents' decision to negotiate with Kabul probably was an exceptional case and does not represent a shift in their longstanding policy on negotiations, however. [REDACTED]

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SOVIET SU-24 STRIKE AIRCRAFT DEPLOY TO TURKESTAN

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[redacted] at least one
squadron of SU-24 Fencer B/C strike aircraft in a
dispersal area at Karshi/Khanabad airfield in
Turkestan. Elements of the Fencer squadron were first
observed at the airfield in early January, [redacted]

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Comment: The arrangements suggest that SU-24s will
replace the MIG-23 interceptor regiment currently
deployed there. Although there is no evidence that the
Fencer unit at Karshi/Khanabad will be used in
Afghanistan, the SU-24s could enhance the Soviets'
capabilities for strike operations in Afghanistan. The
SU-24's optically guided AS-14 air-to-surface missiles
can be fired at targets 10-km distant, a feature which
could limit the effectiveness of insurgent air
defenses. Moreover, the aircraft's payload, avionics,
and combat radius would enhance abilities to deliver
more ordnance with greater accuracy. [redacted]

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IN BRIEF

-- World Concern, a private voluntary organization,
has proposed establishing a veterinary training
program in Pakistan for Afghans. Plans call for
training approximately 100 Afghans--to be selected
in cooperation with the resistance alliance--during
the first year and providing them with 2,400 pack
animals and supplies for animal health programs
inside Afghanistan. The program could be a boon
for insurgent logistics, which depend heavily on
pack animals. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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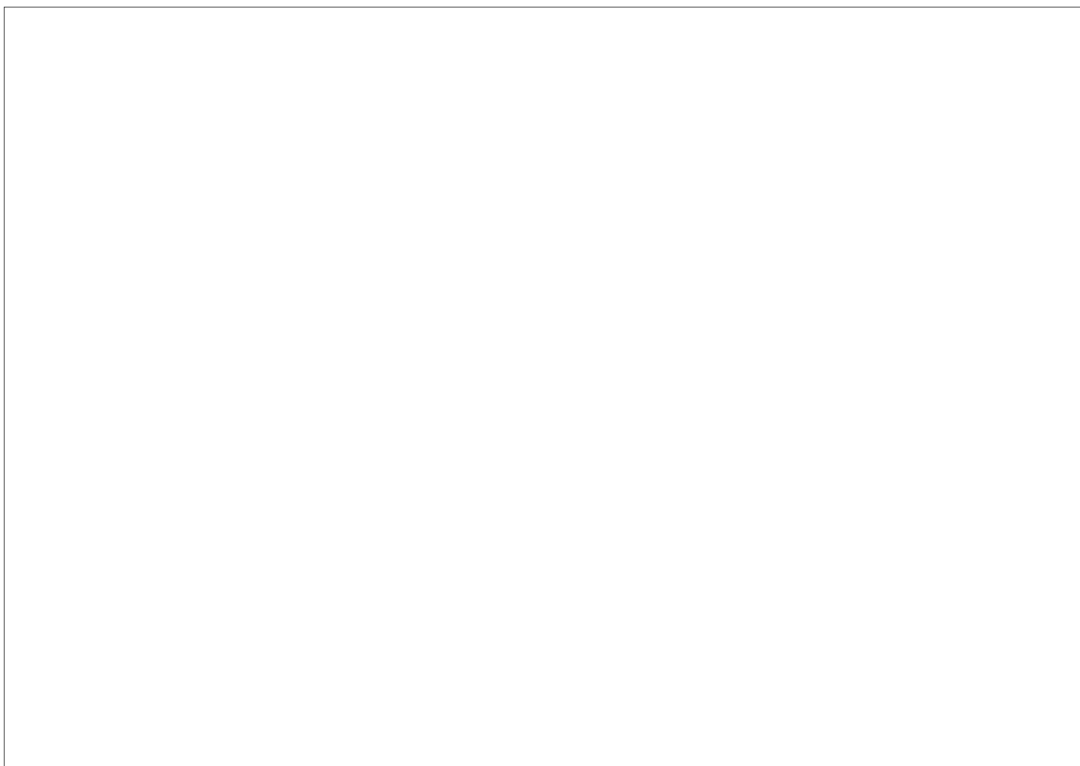
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- The Soviet Union and the Kabul regime signed a protocol on 19 February to have construction units repair roads north of Kabul, [redacted]

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[redacted] The protocol indicates Moscow's concern with the badly deteriorating road system and the limited ability of the Afghan Government to provide basic services. [redacted]

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- Independent border brigades and battalions, previously under the control of the Afghan Ministry of Defense, are now directly under the command of Khad (Ministry of State Security), [redacted]

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[redacted] The transfer of responsibility implies a continuing diminution of the power and influence of the Khalqi-dominated Defense Ministry, to the benefit of Parchami elements in the government. [redacted]

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PERSPECTIVE

THE WAR IN MARCH

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Soviet and Afghan forces continued efforts to stem insurgent resupply and reinforcement activity during the last month of winter. Poor weather occasionally interfered with operations, mostly curbing air support from Bagram. The Afghan Army completed another series of semi-independent combat operations--their largest yet--in the vicinity of Jalalabad, Gardeyz, and Herat--evidently without encountering significant resistance, although insurgent activities were at a moderate level during the month. The guerrillas probably have sufficient supplies to support the expected upsurge in fighting in early spring.

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Widespread Soviet Operations Continue

Soviet operations in three border provinces--Paktia, Nangarhar, and Gardeyz--focused largely on attempting to cut guerrilla supply routes.

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the US Embassy in Kabul reported that Soviet units from Kabul conducted a 5-day sweep in the Lowgar Valley along the road to Ghazni starting on 5 March.

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Soviet forces continued operations around Qandahar city in early March

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The inability of the Soviets and Afghan regime to bring the city under control has been a major frustration for them. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, the Soviets strafed sections of the city during March and subsequently conducted house-to-house searches. claims that a "security belt"--akin to the one around Kabul--is now being

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planned for Qandahar in an attempt to "starve" the insurgency in the city. [REDACTED]

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Soviet and Afghan forces made no appreciable headway during March against the insurgents in the Herat area. [REDACTED] US Embassy in Kabul claim that fighting west of the city was particularly heavy early in the month. [REDACTED]

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Independent Afghan Army Operations

Afghan Army units increased their role in combat operations during March in the vicinity of Jalalabad, Gardeyz, and Herat. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Soviet involvement was limited to perimeter security and air, artillery, and advisory support. The Kabul regime has come under pressure this year to undertake more quasi-independent operations, and the combat sweeps during March are the largest yet. There is little evidence about the course of the combat sweeps, but the Afghan units evidently encountered no sustained resistance from guerrilla forces. Still, the Afghan military probably is not yet ready to assume a leading role in ground operations. [REDACTED]

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TOP SECRET**Insurgents Resurgent**

During March, insurgent forces pressured several Afghan Army garrisons. The US Embassy in Kabul reported that the Afghan Army garrison at Ali Kheyl was surrounded in late March and that the regime sent reinforcements to bolster the defenses of the garrison. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the US Embassy in Kabul also indicate that insurgents increased harassment of Afghan border and army garrisons along the northern boundary of the Spin Gar mountains in Nangarhar Province. In mid-March, Panjsher Valley insurgents launched several attacks against Soviet and Afghan garrisons at Anawa, Bazarak and Rokhah but with inconclusive results, according to US Embassy sources. In addition, an Afghan column was attacked near Gardeyz on 16 March resulting in the capture of 35 Afghan troops. [REDACTED]

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Outlook

Because of the apparent Soviet and Afghan failure to curtail significantly insurgent infiltration and resupply activity this winter, the insurgents probably are adequately equipped to sustain at least the opening phases of the spring campaign. Preparations for that fighting are now under way. [REDACTED]

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